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Pragmatics of taste

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In this chapter we consider the problems facing the sociology of culture with respect to taste. We focus primarily to the case of music and its various genres but also include comparisons with other objects of passion such as cookery and wine, or sport. The aim of our research on different forms of attachment was to steer the sociology of taste away from a critical conception that had become dominant, in which taste is conceived only as a passive social game, largely ignorant about itself. How, without endorsing the concomitant reduction of real practices to their hidden social determinants, can we incorporate sociology's contribution? Various studies have proved the over-determined nature of tastes, their function as markers of social differences and identities, their ritualized functioning, relations of domination between high culture and popular culture, etc. (Hoggart, 1957, Toffler 1965, Williams 1982, Bourdieu 1984, Mukerji & Schudson 1991, Lamont & Fournier 1992, Crane 1994).

But taste is first and foremost a problematical modality of attachment to the world. In terms of this pragmatic conception it can be analysed as a reflexive activity, "corporated", framed, collective, equipped and simultaneously producing the competencies of an amateur and the repertoire of objects that she/he values.

Taking the great amateur seriously

The sociology of taste, master of the analysis of hidden determinants of cultural practices, has indeed produced valuable results. It has irrevocably reintroduced cultural practices and tastes into a real world made of possibilities as well as constraints, relating them to both circumstances and conditions (material, technical, economic and institutional), and to determining factors (like socio-professional category and contact with cultural practices in youth).

But it is necessary to assess the limits of this approach, namely the very restrictive theory of the actor implicit in critical sociology and, above all, the totally passive view of the amateur in Bourdieu's radical reformulation of the classic question of cultural inequalities. At worst, the amateur is a "cultural dope" who is wrong about the nature of what she/he does; at best, she/he is the passive subject of an attachment, the real determinants of which are unknown to her/him and, despite her/his resistance, are revealed in cold statistics. Her/his relationship with culture or the objects of her/his passion is the subject of a purely negative analysis - which shows that this attachment is not what it believes itself to be. From Bourdieu's and his followers' point of view tastes are radically unproductive: the objects are simply random signs, the subjects are merely reproducing the hierarchy of social positions. Taste is culture's way of masking domination.

I claim that sociology should take the amateur more seriously, even treat her/him more respectfully. By conceiving taste as a reflexive activity of amateurs (Frow 1995, Frith 1996, Hennion 2001), it is possible to restore the importance of the objects concerned, of the often highly elaborate formats and procedures that amateurs employ and collectively discuss to guarantee their felicity, of the nature of the activity thus deployed, of the competencies involved and hence, above all, of creative and not only reproductive capacities: as Frith (1996) rightly argued against Bourdieu's unilateral thesis on cultural domination, this is as pertinent in the case of popular culture as it is with high culture (if not more: he shows fans spending hours and hours, late at night, discussing every details of rock records and performances). This means acknowledging what happens through these attachments and is produced with regard to objects, communities, relations with others and with the self, and the amateurs themselves. Taste, passion, various forms of attachment are not primary data, amateurs' fixed properties that can simply be deconstructed analytically. People are active and productive; they constantly transform objects and works, performances and tastes. By focusing on

the pragmatic and performative nature of cultural practices, the analysis can highlight their capacity to transform sensibilities and create new ones, and not only to reproduce an existing order without acknowledging it.

Popular culture and rock studies have shown the way: first they gave a voice to “low-brow” genres, both traditional and commercial, largely ignored and despised by musicology and music studies (cf. *Popular Music*, and the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM), founded in 1981). But, even more crucial, they opened the way to a much wider understanding of music analysis in general, both regarding its production and reception: media, scenery, the making of stars’ image, recording techniques and the record industry, youth as a new market, all those issues were put at the centre of analyses, and not conceived as purely technical or economical realities “beside” music itself (to name but precursors, see Hirsch 1970, Gillett 1972, Peterson 1975, Frith 1978). I undertook my own work on music mediations, showing how audiences were incorporated into production, by a study of popular “hits” created by professionals inside studios (Hennion 1983, 1989), and another one on the same circular production of their audiences by radio stations through programming (Hennion & Méadel 1986). On the audiences’ side, musical analyses could no more be isolated from the social, sexual, generational and political meanings of music, nor could listening be separated from its highly ritualized and collective accomplishment (Willis 1972, Hebdige 1979, Frith 1981); more generally, the active practices of music lovers were put under minute ethnographical scrutiny (Bennett 1980, Cohen 1991).

The case of music was indeed a fine example to use here, owing both to the variety of its genres (popular, oral, highbrow, electronic, commercial, etc.) and to the deployment of its practices on a continuum of mediations: instruments, scores, repertoires, musicians, stages, media, mediums, etc. Based on an analysis of these mediations (Hennion 1993), it is possible to move beyond the sterile opposition between musical knowledge and social analyses that characterized classic studies on music. These studies apply a contrasting treatment to genres, depending on whether they are considered as classical or cultured music and therefore assigned to musicology, as ethnic music and consequently treated as ethnomusicology, or as modern popular music and hence more likely to be studied by sociologists, cultural studies and historians of the present.

On the one hand we have sciences of the object rejecting social “aspects” of music as a secondary environment of the work, basically confusing music with the written score - an issue already raised by critical musicologists like Durant (1984), Kerman (1985) and Bergeron & Bohlman (1992); on the other, a sociology of music which, lacking specific affordances to grasp musical objects, has been content to turn around them, giving music a context or transforming it into a pretext for games of which the real determinations are social. Even when, in the case of popular music, critical musicologists show one’s capacity to express and achieve new identities, generations, groups, fashions and lifestyles, music does not exist much as such either; it is nothing more than a neutral medium for social play, and it is still very difficult to take into account in which ways “music itself” matters.

A choice ally: the history of art

This is where, based on the history of art, I would like to show the necessity of effecting a dual movement that switches from a conception founded on the critical sociology of music to a pragmatic conception of taste. This supposes a shift in focus, from reflection on what can be done with music, with the sociological and musicological tools at our disposal, to a questioning on what music does. At the same time we would switch from a music-centred focus to a focus on the amateur, taste and listening (Morrow 1989, Johnson 1995, DeNora 2000, Szendy 2001). The two movements naturally correspond, with both characterizing the pragmatic change to be made, in terms of the approach, for the one, and in terms of the object of analysis, for the other.

For that purpose, disciplines in the field of music are more of a hindrance than a help. Their critique is not enough to produce anything new. But we can draw on the history of art. Once everyone had ended up agreeing on the poorness and randomness of analyses of Marxist inspiration in terms of reflections and superstructures, authors like F. Haskell and M. Baxandall found paths, from opposite perspectives, enabling them to move their discipline away from the oscillation between the infinite exegesis of works and their futile replacement in a social and political context desperately unable to talk about them or to make them talk. By studying the gaze, uses, collections, gestures, the history of a work, and the formation of taste (Baxandall 1972, Haskell 1976, Haskell & Penny 1981), these authors have already accomplished the switch described above,

for similar reasons and with similar analytical, theoretical and methodological effects. Their work shows that the famous "works themselves", those absolutes of beauty, have constantly changed meaning, shape, place and direction throughout history, along with the judgements on them. Above all, they have shown that these works, through their mediums and restorations, and the way they have been gathered together, presented, commented on and reproduced, have continuously reconfigured the frame of their own evaluation.

The lesson is powerful. It tells us that the history of taste is not something separate from that of works, no more than the principles of reception are opposed to those of creation (notwithstanding their crucial contribution, this is a limit of Jauss's (1982) and Iser's (1978) reception theories). It is not possible to distinguish between the two. Works "make" the gaze that beholds them, and the gaze makes the works. Hence, this entangled history does not lead to a theory of the arbitrary, in the sense of the infinite variety of situations and appreciations causing doubt on the very possibility of establishing any kind of link between works and the taste associated with them. On the contrary, by putting the accent on the co-formation of a set of objects and the frame of their appreciation, this model requires ever more ties, attachments and mediations. Gradually every step influences both future perceptions and past catalogues of works, in reconfigurations that constantly rewrite their own history to develop their future. Haskell and Baxandall show us art gradually tracing the frame in which we "understand" it, in all senses of the word, i.e. all the work that was needed to identify systems of circulation, valorization, judgement and appreciation, and, reciprocally, everything that the establishment of these networks, neatly linking up works and art lovers, has changed in the works themselves - including works from the past, right down to their most concrete features. We tried to apply this lesson to analyse the "use" - not the reception! - of Bach in France in the 19th century (Fauquet & Hennion 2000).

The pragmatic turn

Here we are, thanks to historians of art, better equipped to understand a more fundamental meaning of the turn to which I referred: not only a change of object (from works themselves to taste), nor even a change of method (from head-on analysis and abstraction of various dimensions, to the meticulous study of mediations really used), but a change of status of the interpretation itself. The explained becomes the explainer. The variables serving as benchmarks are in fact the product of the history written by the works to which we apply them. Causes do not come from above, from the disciplines that focus on their object of study, but from below, from the gradual course that produced the reality under study.

This switch is expressed equally vigorously in the present, synchronously: it is the word pragmatic that conveys it perfectly this time (Austin 1962, and on popular culture, Shusterman 1992). Musics are made, they make their world and their listeners, and are measured only through what they make. Just as music is a history writing its own history, so it is also a reality making its own reality. The points of method are the same: it is necessary to go through each mediation, look at each device, see each situation act, and follow the way in which pieces and languages, but also bodies, collectives, objects, writings, ways of judging and ways of listening circulate, producing sets of works or styles of music, qualified and commented on, and publics ready to receive them. This general circularity, here again, relates not to the sterile arbitrariness of a play on codes, but to the co-formation of musical objects that convey increasingly elaborate differences, to listeners who are increasingly able and desirous to perceive them and, more generally, to collective frames that enable this activity to be deployed in all its diversity.

Such a pragmatics aims at restoring the performative nature of the activity of taste, instead of making it an observance. When one says that one loves opera or rock - and what one likes, how one likes it, why, etc. - this is already a way of liking it more, and vice-versa. Music is event and advent, which means that it is perpetually transformed by any contact with its public, on whose listening it inevitably depends. Tasting does not mean signing one's social identity, labelling oneself as fitting into a particular role, observing a rite, or passively reading the properties "contained" in a product as best one can. It is a performance: it acts, engages, transforms and is felt.

This is where we need to take another turn, towards the amateur, the fan - the one who does something with music (we use a broad sense of the word amateur - as for "taste" -, referring to any form of love or practice, and not only to the restrictive cultured sense of a connoisseurship centred on knowledge of the object itself). This is the best way not to take music as a given. It is taste as an activity that interests us and not the amateur "her/himself" - who would take the place of the works

"themselves" (before also disappearing under her/his social determinants, at a wave of the sociologist's magic wand). Thus formulated, the hypothesis has no reason to relate to a subject more than to the multitude of elements necessary for the deployment of listening. This activity is above all a framework, a collective, a set of material discursive devices, the accumulation of ways of acting or practising, and of many objects and mediums on which to rely. It is also a body, a mind that accustoms itself to music - but that, precisely, is gradually produced in music, with it, and not facing it.

In fact, the pragmatic switch also requires a reform of the status of theories of taste, calling to mind the lessons of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967): the analyst is part of this great process of collective production. Her/his theoretical work no longer amounts to extracting a particular dimension from amateurs' profuse activity, to transform it into an external explanatory variable. It consists in reflexively taking into account the pragmatic self-formation of taste by amateurs themselves, not critically reducing real taste by subjecting it to a purified interpretation.

The challenge of the analysis is growing: the idea is to explain the amateur's attachments, tastes, ways of acting and pleasures, as an activity in its own right and an elaborate competence, capable of self-criticism - instead of seeing it only as the passive play of social differentiation. The latter view is now generalized to the point where amateurs often present their own tastes exclusively as pure social signals, determined by their origin, that they know to be relative and historical, pretexts for diverse rituals - and, paradoxically, it is the sociologist who must "de-sociologize" the amateur for her/him to talk about her/his pleasure, or the amazing techniques she/he develops to (sometimes) attain felicity. For the amateur is a virtuoso when it comes to experimentation, aesthetics, techniques, the social, the mental and the corporeal. Far from being the "cultural dope" referred to by Garfinkel, the great amateur on whom we focus here is the model of an inventive, reflexive actor, closely linked to a collective, obliged constantly to put to the test the determinants of the effects she/he seeks regarding works or products, social and mimetic determinism of taste, conditioning of body and mind, dependence on a collective, a vocabulary of social practices and, lastly, material devices and practices invented to intensify her/his feelings and perceptions.

Taste as a reflexive activity

In this view, taste is taken to be a productive activity of critical amateurs - unlike in the critical sociology of taste where it is seen as a determined attribute of passive subjects. The key concept here is reflexivity, both as central to the activity of amateurs themselves and as a method required by the sociologist in order to account for that activity (Clifford & Marcus 1986, Beck, Giddens & al 1994). Saying that the musical object or the taste for wine are not given, but result from a performance by the taster - based on techniques, physical training, and repeated trials, necessarily over a period of time - is relating the very possibility of a description back to amateurs' know-how. Taste, pleasure and effect are not exogenous variables or automatic attributes of objects. They are the reflexive result of a physical, collective and equipped practice, regulated by methods that are themselves constantly revised. That is why I prefer to talk about attachments and practices, which lays less emphasis on labels and more on the framed activity of individuals, and leaves open the possibility of taking whatever emerges into account.

This reflexive nature of taste is almost a definition, a founding act, that of attention, suspension, a pause on what is happening - and, symmetrically, a stronger presence of the tasted object which also moves on, takes its time, unfolds (Merleau-Ponty 1964). If one drinks a glass casually while thinking about something else, one is not an amateur. Beautiful things only give themselves to those who give themselves to them. But if one stops even just for a fraction of a second and observes oneself tasting, the act is established. From an isolated chance event one moves on to the continuity of an interest, and the moment becomes an opportunity among others in a course based on past opportunities. That is the difference between liking and "being an amateur", even to a minimal degree. We see that it also relates to a double history, personal and collective and, more generally, to an individual space in which the activity has afforded itself places, moments, means for constituting itself as such - what I am referring to when I say that taste is a framed activity. One does not like wine or music just by chance. One likes music and one "likes music" (or a particular music): one shifts slightly away from oneself to "enter into" this activity which has a past and a space, marked by its objects, its other participants, its ways of doing things, its places and moments, and its institutions - an issue rock makes very clear, as fans are much more likely to say "I'm a rocker" than "I like rock". Let's make it clear that this reflexive character (an issue here at its zero degree

due simply to the fact of putting oneself into an identified disposition) does not assume that there is necessarily reflection by actors (which implies a degree of calculation and awareness of what one does at a far higher level, and the passage from a simple variation in our modes of presence in situations, to the level of deliberate action, see e.g. Thévenot 1990).

The reflexivity described in this example at its most local and instantaneous level is equally present at the more global level of a domain of taste or form of amateurism, like music or the love of wine. As the domain becomes more general we see it held or strained by critiques, guides, accounts, prescriptions, norms, debates on what must or must not be done, and various types of self-descriptive discourse (Strathern 1999). Taste is formed as it is expressed and is expressed as it is formed. Reflexivity as a tool tends to take the more classic form of writing and, characteristically, each domain spawns its own jargon that slots in between the physiological or technical description of objects and the literary account of the amateur's emotion: in this regard opera lovers' rich magazines are not so different from heavy metal or house music fanzines. Through these over-coded self-expressions, for example of the taste of wine (red berries, roots, mushrooms, truffle, wood, etc.), neither purely technical nor only imagery, taste is identified, equipped, and can be shared with others. In music this intermediate language often annoys the professional as much as the listener but it gives affordances that neither subjective commentary nor technical musical analysis can provide, to express "what is happening" and not to say what music is, on the one hand, nor freely describe the worlds into which it drags the imagination, on the other. It is in this sense that we can say that the amateur has written music, just as the history of music has produced its amateurs. They have mutually formed each other.

A theory of attachments

Thus understood as a long-term process and construction, based on mediations, bodies, objects, situations, equipments, taste has nothing to do with the naked face-to-face between object and subject - as the quarrel between aesthetics and critical sociology has accustomed us to seeing it, positively or negatively, mostly focusing on the extremities of this relationship. Any attachment mobilizes various elements in one way or another. As a start, we therefore considered four of them: the community of amateurs, the devices and conditions of tasting, the body that experiences, and the tasted object - without attributing any exclusive basic character to them. They only define a minimal framework of components of taste as an activity. In one sense, the various particular attachments are based on these elements and grant each one a different significance. In the other sense, these constructions continually redefine and reconfigure tastes by their own elaborations.

- Taste as an activity is accomplished through a collective which provides a frame, the relevance of the effort, and which guarantees results, accompanies, guides, puts into words. Bourdieu rightly said that taste is always a distaste. We cannot like without rejecting (especially if it's something we liked before): "What? How can you like that, it's vile, worthless!". This disgust is always based in some way on others' taste, either negatively, as in this example, or positively: the recurrent presence of a mediator, an initiator, in the decisive steps of the amateur's constitution of her/his taste, and equally in the practical methods used to develop it: example set by a recognized amateur is crucial here, like when an older opera fan corrects the "prejudices" of a younger one who enters the domain and still despises Bellini or Auber: "wait a little, you'll see what you'll think of them later" ...; or, exactly on the same model, when a techno amateur shrugs at seeing his young mate's records and lets him hear "the right thing", far from all this "commercial" stuff. There is no taste as long as one is alone, facing objects; no amateur knows from the outset how to appreciate good things, or simply what she/he likes. Taste starts with the comparison with others' tastes.

The collective is not the hidden truth of taste; it is the obligatory starting point. Some of these other amateurs serve as models, forcing the neophyte to scorn what she/he formerly liked and to like what until then she/he had disparaged. Others serve as foils, or nostalgic images of past tastes, thus helping to cast off misplaced attachments: "you only like what you were", I once heard a rock fan say to another whose rigid tastes irritated him. The comment is profound: it indicates awareness of the fact that taste is a history determined by a past, but also that it is negotiation in the present with that past which can and must be left behind.

Far from being the great amateur's more or less acknowledged snobbery or an unconscious game of self-definition in relation to others, this reliance on others is a good way of anticipating one's own inclinations and of taking some guarantees, by partly delegating one's judgement to those who have

other experience than oneself. This is one of the basic techniques that the novice has to get closer to good things (with tests, comparisons, consultation of guides, etc. - all ways of doing things which similarly can be deployed only through collective action and the inscription of a taste in time). Conversely, as the case of rock showed with such obviousness that it became a cliché, the production of a taste "makes" its own collectives (i.e. ways of living, dressing, going out, walking, etc.), gradually defined and stabilized by this community, especially since it is precisely not calculable and is based on feelings, bodies, gestures and objects, and not on a "general will" postulated by the political philosopher or on a determinist belonging regulated by social games. Taste is a most efficient "group-maker".

- Taste closely depends on its situations and material devices: time and space frame, tools, circumstances, rules, ways of doing things. It involves a meticulous temporal organization, collective arrangements, objects and instruments of all kinds, and a wide range of techniques to manage all that - a point most clearly showed by Becker (1982). Far from revealing a purely ritual or arbitrary nature of our tastes, their importance signals the conditional - in the strong sense - nature of pleasure and effect, its automatic non-dependence on products on the one hand and our preferences on the other. For our study of amateurs (Teil & Hennion, 2003), I interviewed a great lover of opera and chamber music, first in an interview situation and then in his home, in a special lounge where, isolated from the family and their dog, he listens to his records. The first interview was highly predictable: bourgeois milieu, sister violinist, current occupation (doctor), uncle who took him to concerts when he was young, first time he went to the opera - an unforgettable experience. But situated among the objects, in the place, of his passion, it was another man who opened up, revealing to another amateur his gestures, his odd little ways, his lists with items ticked off, his equipment. His taste had found its space, and there was nothing passive about it. For example, before putting them away he used to leave many new records in the bottom right-hand corner of his bookcase - until the day he had the idea of transforming this disorder into the basis of a system for arranging his records. From then on he let them move upwards to the left, only depending on the last time he had listened to them. This is a typical invention of an amateur: his record library gradually changed into a reflection of his tastes. The amateur triumphed over the musicologist: his taste, not the history of music, governs his system of classification. Considering the maintenance of an amused memory of what happened, the satisfaction of making a mistake and of measuring his false memories, the pleasure of being the only one to know where a specific record might be (when he does know...), it's easy to see in his jubilation that he's winning on all fronts!

Taste also depends on the techniques of presentation of the self that both object and amateur know how to develop: comparisons, rehearsals, comments and discussions, tests and trials of own preferences, etc. Take, for instance, the renewal of Baroque music in the 1970s and 1980s, which I studied (Hennion 1993: 25-67). What was then presented as an aesthetic, even political, debate between two clearly distinct camps, was above all a systematic questioning of all the means, mediums, objects and devices of musical execution: pitch, voices, instruments, tunings, number of players, rendering of scores and ornaments, ways of playing and the role of improvisation, the venues and formats of concerts, the public arena, the status of recordings, etc. The quarrel concerned fundamental issues less than the complete series of mediators of music. The same applies to rock and its various currents: nothing describes contrasts between styles and trends better than the type of equipment on which musicians play and the places in which they do so (Hennion 1997), an issue made obvious in the case of techno various genres, named after their mythified places of origin ("house", "garage", etc.). In the end, these various technical and material mediums of taste afford an ideal entrance for the observer, as they are the main mediums of its expression in words and of discussions aimed at commenting on it, increasing it, enhancing it or challenging some of its tricks.

- Taste as a form of work also implies an engagement by the body that tastes. Here again, there is nothing mechanical. The body that tastes is not a natural given; it is the product of the activity, an engagement that goes from the training of faculties in the quasi-sporting sense of the word, in the long term, to the active nature of one's "conditioning" at the time of tasting (in sporting terms, at the time of the performance). Taste, amateurism, passion for an object or interest in a practice are "corporated" activities. This word is more appropriate than "incorporated" (constantly used by Bourdieu along with "objectified", symmetrically), or "embodied" (frequently used by cultural studies). The latter two words, far from endorsing the corporeal aspect of art, music or taste, solve the issue by insisting unilaterally on the idea of a "social construction" of the body through

devices and norms and, in the continuation of Mauss's superb passages on the body or the hand (1979 [1936]), and of course after Foucault's brilliant analyses of power devices (1978), on the crucial fact that the body is the ideal receptacle, flexible, mute and effective, of inculcated ways of acting and constraints of all kinds, especially social and educational.

The more neutral word *corporated* pulls in the opposite, equally important, direction: not only an over-determining social of which the subject is largely unaware, that imprints its mark on a body which believes itself to be natural, but also a body which is unaware of itself, has to reveal itself, to appear to itself and to the subject gradually, as its extensive interaction with objects and its training through repeated practice make it more competent, more skilled, more sensitive to what is happening; and, conversely, as this production of a body capable of sensing reveals more clearly the objects that it grasps, senses and apprehends, and even its capacity to recognize what others recognize, and to share effects felt with other bodies (DeNora 1999). As Merleau-Ponty so rightly said, if the body is the minimal medium for our feelings and actions, if it is what cannot be detached from us, not our property but nevertheless something which is our own, then, conversely, it is the body that gives substance, for us, to outside objects, through contact, apprehension, the senses. It is always the starting point for something to occur.

The case of listening and of "discomorphosis" of music (Hennion 1981) is revealing. The record, by making of it something to listen to, has created a new music. Before its existence, whether at home or at a concert, music was first something to do (including for its audiences), and most often to do together. From the availability of a repertoire to its facility of immediate acquisition and selection, from the importance of the physical position to that of the hi-fi "system" which goes from the body to the sound enveloping it, from free listening to unlimited repetition, there is now actually a "listening" function. The diversity of these listenings highlights the inventiveness of amateur-users, who bring to mind Michel de Certeau's strollers or Luce Giard's Sunday cooks (1980). Emphasizing listening is reintroducing the irreducible heterogeneity of a reality-event, made of folds and interweavings. Not a work and a listener, but bodies, devices, arrangements, duration, an ungraspable object, a passing moment, states that suddenly appear... After all, outside laboratories and schools, what else is music?

The question then is not so much to understand how a "natural" body is determined, trained, formed and deformed by its social environment. It first and foremost concerns the co-production of the body that loves and the loved object, through a collective and equipped activity. Exercise is the right word for this: the body exercises and gets used to the exercise, and on the way the word exercise slides from training to the faculty that one exercises. The more "constructed" the gesture of a tennis player, the more "natural" it becomes to her/him, so that the ball flies through the air much faster if she/he is relaxed. But this can be so only with the racket, the net, the court, the rules of the game, the opponent, and years of practice. No language, no nose, no taste for wine until the wine has become the object of a set of practices that place it at their centre. No ear, no musical emotion, without a music to listen to. It took over three hundred years of practices and inventions to create our way of loving music.

- Finally, taste depends on "feedback" from the tasted object, from what it does and causes to do. This time the evidence is a paradox only for sociologists, who consider everything in the taste relationship except the presence and effects of the tasted product. But this does not either mean a straightforward analysis of its "properties". The object does not "contain" its effects (Gomart & Hennion 1999) - a point aesthetics very clearly elaborated, speaking of "works", not of objects: taste is discovered precisely from uncertainty, from variation, from a deepening of the effects of the product - and these effects do not depend only on the product but also on its moments, its deployment and circumstances. We should say objects in the plural, then - a score, a piece, a guitar, a rock record, a soundtrack, etc. - rather than Object with a capital O that the work of art model tends to prefer. The plural is more appropriate, as music helps to show: loving music is not simply a matter of a particular piece; it passes through a multitude of mediators (Hennion 1993), beginning with the present - the sound of an instrument, the atmosphere of a hall, the grain of a record, the tone of a voice, the body of a musician -, but also in the duration of a history - scores, repertoires and styles, genres and more or less stable forms -, or for each individual - a past, works heard, moments lost, desires unfulfilled, roads travelled with others, and so on.

The sociologist's variable and reflexively controlled engagement in the practice she/he is observing is a classic problem. On this question of the object, a very simple experiment during our study on amateurs concerned individual singing lessons that one of us (a musician, "nothing more")

observed over a long period. The problem was not listening but "hearing": the very fact of perceiving what was happening between teacher and pupil. At first all the notes concerned postures, gestures, incomprehensible words, hesitations, signs exchanged between the teacher and pupil. At the end there was nothing but voice, sound, effects on the listener, quality of vowels, relative beauty ("that's better", "it's not as nice as just before"), smiles during a particular passage, success or failure of a particular repetition, with frequent use of singers' own terminology: overture, covering, closure, resonance, etc.

To simplify, we go from a report that is one hundred percent social and zero percent musical to the exact opposite. The experiment spectacularly demonstrates the perverse effect of a sociological theory that transforms all activities into indifferent pretexts of games, the most important of which is social. Then, the less we know the less we risk "being had" by the actors' belief. That is what transforming ignorance and insensitivity into sociological competence is all about! But nothing exists that could be called an "object" of music, so obvious that it would no longer be seen as such from the inside, by the initiated, and so easy to isolate that sociologists would have nothing else to do but the social work surrounding this issue (in French enjeu, or il-lusio, to use the famous etymology highlighted by Bourdieu). The object is not "the music", a given, that could be isolated from the activity; it is what arises with it, through it. Sensitivity to differences of quality is not given from the outset, it is acquired with time. The observer learns to hear at the same time as the singer learns to sing. Reciprocally, once she hears, she pays little attention to what struck her exclusively at first, when all that gesticulation seemed largely arbitrary - to use a key word in critical sociology, occupied at showing actors' objects are but tokens made by beliefs and conventions. We find the idea of performativity here: the means we give ourselves to grasp the object - to be able to listen to it, in the case of music - are part of the effects it can produce.

Conclusion: taste as a form of presence in the world?

This temporary list of basic elements is not intended to be exhaustive, nor necessarily relevant nor stable. The main argument concerns the status of the elements. None of them is ever "given" or natural, pre-existing. Their content is revealed gradually, and their meaning clarified precisely through the amateurs' explorations, trials and experiences - the "tests of taste". Taste is produced, not given; it is "tentative", "to be made" through what happens, and not the recording of an external reality. It is necessary to get together (this can be a physical meeting, as is often the case, but it can also simply be an indirect influence on a community, on traditions, on accounts and writings, or on others' taste); to train one's faculties and perceptions (both collectively and individually), to learn tricks and ways of doing things, to have a repertory, classifications and techniques that reveal the differences between objects; to become aware of the body that makes itself receptive to these differences and that not only learns about itself but also invents and shapes itself during the experience - as Becker (1963) showed with regard to drug consumers.

In our comparative analysis the four elements just serve as a framework to reveal various aspects of the configurations of spaces equipped and corporated, that the world of taste constitutes. The proposed grid is a minimal language, aimed more at providing infra-theory than supra- or meta-discourse: more at going "down", closer to actors' categories, than "up", towards a systematic, external model. Its main purpose is to allow comparisons to be made between various forms of attachment.

Comparison is always fertile, for both common points and differences are enlightening. Sport, for instance, enables us to focus more attention on long-term training in a particular physical, mental and technical skill, producing a body that performs better. But there is no sport without an object, either a bar setting the height at which to jump or a net separating two players. A minimal object, no doubt, if we compare it to the richness of that of music or the concentration of that of wine. Minimal objects also, in the plural, in so far as they are necessary in the practice of the activity. But in these two associated senses of the word object (objective to achieve and required equipment), the role of this element is indispensable for the sport to exist. No high jump without a bar - and that also means without competitions, records, rivalry and complicity of other jumpers, coaches, styles and schools of thought, nor the host of techniques to transmit and develop, regarding both the body and equipment. All the elements of our framework are there. However, in the case of sport, among the four elements proposed (objects, collectives, devices, bodies), the crucial issues concern above all the production of a skilled body. For us analysts the case will serve to demonstrate that there is no natural body, given before it reveals itself in its own exercise. Only long, patient, hard and laborious

training ends up giving athletes the very strong feeling (that singers, for instance, also have) that they have at their disposal a "natural" body whose gestures effortlessly and spontaneously articulate their performance. The logician may see an oxymoron in what is a commonplace among all those who train: the idea that it is necessary to work to become natural. But the amateur sees no contradiction. And she/he is right; she/he simply takes possession of a collectively elaborated corporeal competency.

The case of wine is more likely to draw the analysis towards the capacity of an object such as wine not to "hold" in a glass, to defy the glass in order to develop, and to require deployment, a variable past and future, sparingly revealing the flavours, intensities and presences that only the taste placed in it can deliver, without there ever being any certainty that everything has been expressed. This strange status of an object that needs to be considered as a potential history and a latent destiny will be the critical point. But, just as there is no sport without an object (or objects), there is no wine without tasters, devices, an accumulated history that has made it possible to concentrate the taste of wine in the glass of an informed taster whose palate has become the other side of wine, the body indispensable for the wine to have "body" too.

We have considered the cases of sport and wine, but by relating the points made to musicians - not only professionals but also listeners -, the inadequacy of the dual "music-society" model that neglects bodies and devices becomes obvious. There is no music without the gradual collective production of listening, of a specific "ear", ranging from the most general establishment of a frame of attention (listening to music for music) to the more local and personal habit of listening to a particular piece in the place and at the time that suits us (Hennion 2002) - a way of doing things that the record industry has systematized (Maisonneuve 2001) but that started to prevail from the late eighteenth century with the manufacturing of pianos (Ehrlich 1976) and the development of music publishing (Peacock & Weir 1975).

There have always been professionals, music, the stage, the public recital, dance, sculpture and painting - everywhere where there has been ritual, religious, political or social activity. What is new is not the public execution of artistic activities by professionals; it is the rise of the amateur, the spectator, the fan, the creation of a "targeted" public that attends precisely for a particular performance. This refers not only to a mass public and a market - as analysts are too quick to conclude, following in the footsteps of Walter Benjamin (1992 [1936]) - but also to a new competency, slowly and painstakingly elaborated through devices, practices, objects, repertoires and new social formats, thus producing new individual and collective sensibilities and, even before that, simply new auditory capacities and new attention - this may be what made so meaningful in the case of rock the word "generation", with its double sense. Precisely what we could call a musical body - in the sense that prompts W. Weber (1997) to wonder whether people really listened to music in the eighteenth century: without the complex set of devices and dispositions that make up our ear, is using the word "to listen" with regard to another century not a pure anachronism?

Taste is clearly a machine that reveals difference, but not in the sense of a reduction to a known mechanism, an available social stock of differences of another social or ritual order, projected onto the fictive screen of the natural: in so far as this natural is ungraspable without procedures. Like the social itself, it is not given. It has to arise, allow itself to be grasped, and can be experienced only through a trial device and a body that is itself put to the test. This is why taste is always reflexive. It is not perceiving or feeling on the basis of what one knows, but discovering oneself as a taster through worked and repeated contact with that which was not perceived. Owing to this elaboration (and above all to this presentation most often offered by other amateurs playing the part of mediators), it is perceiving what one had not formerly perceived and, at the same time, sensing that one feels others' feelings.

A final, "tentative" idea, to conclude: why not generalize this analysis of the amateur's competencies to far more varied forms of attachment? Can the amateur's meticulous, highly elaborate, debated knowledge not provide a model for analysing more ordinary, lay, silent devices through which we are (and make ourselves be) present to the situations in which we live, throughout the day? What great amateurs enable us to see more easily, owing to their high level of engagement in a particular practice, is a range of social techniques that make us able to produce and continuously to adjust a creative relationship with objects, with others, with ourselves and with our bodies; in other words, a pragmatic presence vis-à-vis the world that makes us and that we make.

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